



February 15, 2023

RE: S.B. No989 An act concerning Nursing Homes Direct Care Minimum Staffing

Dear Human Services and Aging Committee Members:

I am writing this testimonial in reference to the proposed unfunded 4.1 direct hours per patient day bill that is before the committee. I cannot support this proposal, as funding and the workforce are not available to meet such a mandate.

Bethel Health Care is a 161 bed skilled nursing facility located in Bethel, CT. I began my career in skilled nursing 13 years ago in the admissions department. My experience quickly solidified my passion and to advance in the healthcare field. The difference we make in the lives of our residents and families is invaluable. I have been fortunate to work for a company that supports its employees in advancement, as I have worked in several management positions including Administrator for the past 5 years.

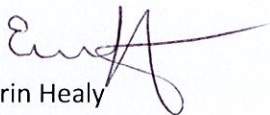
I am confident in saying I speak for all Connecticut Nursing Homes when I tell you that our biggest daily challenge remains staffing. We navigate the days and weeks to creatively fill schedule gaps due to vacant positions and other staffing issues. In an effort to mitigate these challenges, we focus heavily on recruitment and retention efforts both at a regional and facility level. Bethel sponsors C.N.A certificate programs and we provide onsite clinical rotations for multiple CNA, LPN and RN schools. We provide robust employee incentives, such as scholarship programs, sign on bonuses, referral bonuses and employer funded retirement plan. In addition, the company has provided enhanced medical benefits, increased starting wages and provides wage increases to staff every 6 months.

Despite robust efforts, we continually struggle to find quality staff and fill the necessary positions. We are forced to use agency nursing, which is far from ideal. Aside from the exorbitant costs, agency staffing disturbs the continuity of care for our residents. Agency staff are not invested in the facility, and therefore we experience excessive call outs, no shows and limited dependability. Such behaviors cause a low staff morale, high turnover rates and a decrease in quality of care. We continue to pay unsustainable bonuses to our dedicated staff to pick up additional shifts and lessen the unavoidable negative impact associated with agency nursing. This too causes high burnout and negatively impacts the residents and the facility.

The proposed staffing mandate will not produce the needed staff, instead, it positions facilities for failure to comply. The exorbitant costs of staffing with agency and employee shift bonuses, leave insufficient resources to hire increased levels of staff even if the workforce was available. Instead, funding is needed in conjunction with a sustainable plan to add resources for Connecticut Nursing Homes.

Thank you for taking the time to review my concerns and I am asking you not to support S.B. No 989  
Minimum Staffing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Erin Healy', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Erin Healy  
Administrator